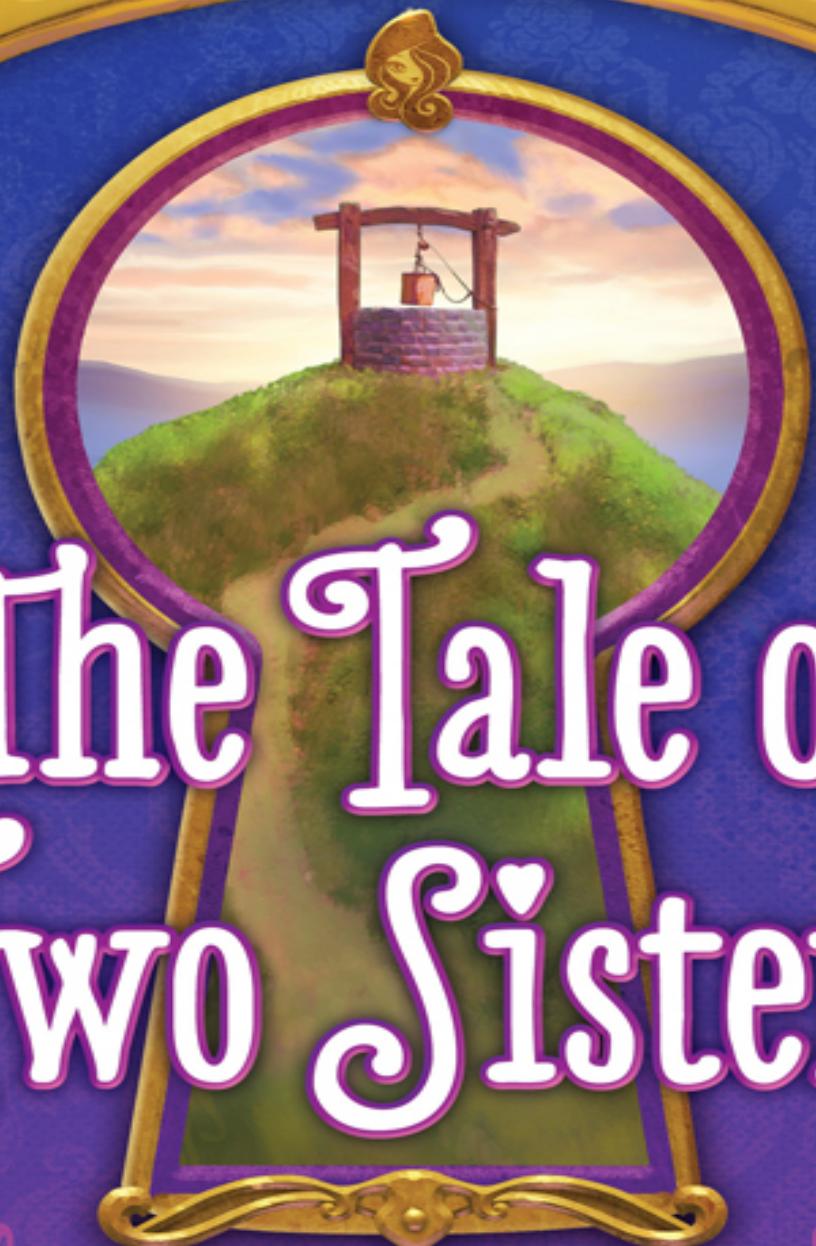




Ever After High



The Tale of Two Sisters

A SHORT STORY BY
SHANNON HALE

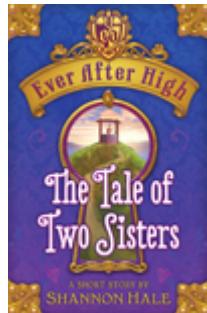
Ever After High

The Tale of Two Sisters

by Shannon Hale



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[Begin Reading](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

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In *The Storybook of Legends*, Raven Queen faced the ultimate decision: to follow her mother's footsteps and become the next Evil Queen or break free from destiny and write her own future. In the Vault of Lost Tales, she discovered a spellbinding fairytale that helped her make her choice... and changed her world forever after. Read “The Tale of Two Sisters” below!

Raven turned the book over in her hands. The green leather cover was cracked and chipping, the pages yellow with age. She opened to the page marked with a ribbon. Her breath caught. “The Two Sisters.”

Once upon a time, there were two sisters. One was so good and kind that butterflies were drawn to her. They perched on her fingers, touched her gently with their noses, and slept in her hair like jeweled pins. Although she was good-hearted, her hair was dull and colorless, her cheeks without blush, her lips thin and sad. Her teeth pushed out and were as crooked as tumbledown fence posts.

Her sister, on the other hand, was as beautiful as a starry night. Her hair was deep black, her eyes twinkly, her teeth white behind her full-lipped smile. And yet she was so selfish and vain that wasps and flies were drawn to her. They buzzed around her head, landing in her hair to try to make their nests.

One morning their mother sent them to the well in the woods to fetch water. As they walked, the beautiful sister swatted at the bugs around her head.

“Shoo!” she said. “Shoo, you wretched things!”

The flies and wasps just kept buzzing.

“I’ll show you,” she said.

She climbed up the side of the well and put one foot in the bucket, holding on to the rope.

“Be useful for once and lower me down,” she ordered her sister. “Make sure my head goes under, but then bring me back up quickly or I’ll make you pay for my discomfort.”

“As you ask, sister dear,” said the ugly sister.

She lowered the bucket down. When the beautiful sister’s head went under the water, the wasps and flies flew away.

The ugly girl quickly pulled her sister back up. Her sister was much heavier than a bucket of water, and the rope hurt the girl’s hands, but she didn’t complain. She put out her hand and helped her beautiful sister out. But as soon as she was standing again, the beautiful sister shoved her away.

“That was too slow!” She shivered. The buzzing insects were gone at last, but she was soaked and freezing.

“Now it is your turn,” the beautiful sister insisted. “I won’t be the only one wet and cold.”

“But I don’t want to,” said the ugly sister, holding a hand to her head. Butterflies with furled wings clung to her hair, fast asleep.

“Get in!” said the beautiful sister, pushing her toward the well.

The ugly sister was scared, but she climbed over the well’s edge and put her foot in the bucket.

The beautiful sister lowered the ugly sister into the water.

The ugly sister kept her head up, straining to keep the butterflies above water.

“That’s far enough,” the ugly sister called as the water rose to her neck. “I’m all wet and cold now. You can bring me up.” Water rose to her chin.

“All right, all right, you can stop yammering on,” said the beautiful sister. She started to pull on the rope.

But she glanced down and saw her shadow lying on the forest floor. How sleek her neck! How fine her shoulders! How lovely her head without those wasps and flies flitting around. She raised her hands to smooth her hair and let go of the rope. She heard her sister cry out but was too interested in her silhouette to bother helping.

In the well, the ugly sister began to sink. She sank deeper and deeper into the cold water, the smooth sides of the well rushing past her fingers. She called out for her sister, but she heard no answer.

Her tears mixed with the well water. The butterflies drank it. And there, at the bottom of the well, a brilliant light flared. And another, and another,

pink and white and blue, green and orange, dazzling shapes fluttering and flaring in the watery darkness. The wet butterflies, given power by the kind girl's tears, were glowing like fireflies and swimming like fish. The ugly sister drew courage from their light and swam, too. Together they fought their way up out of the well.

The ugly sister managed to seize the stones of the well and climb up the side. The glowing butterflies gripped her sleeves, helping to lift her over the side, and at last she put her feet down on the forest floor.

The beautiful sister forgot her shadow and looked up. The light from the butterflies became hotter and brighter. She shielded her eyes. There was a flash that knocked the selfish girl onto the ground.

When she could see again, her sister stood before her. Her hair was now the color of summer poppies, her eyes a brilliant leaf green, her cheeks pink as roses, her lips red as a hibiscus bloom. Her smile was breathtaking. She was as beautiful as she was kind.

“Oh no! What happened to you?” asked the kind sister.

The selfish sister’s hands rose to her face. She raced to the well and looked at her reflection. All the shine and straightness was gone from her features. She was as unsightly now as her heart was unkind.

And from the depths of the well rose a swarm of flies and wasps, very angry and louder than ever. The selfish sister ran and ran, through the woods and far away, but she could never escape that buzzing again.

The kind sister returned home with a bucket of water for her mother.

“Look what happened to my face,” said the girl.

Her mother squinted. “What? You look the same to me as always.”

The kind sister kissed her mother’s cheek, and they lived happily together for the rest of their days.

Raven read the tale aloud to Maddie. And then she read the messages two people had jotted down in the margins of the pages.

I don’t want to be the mean Beautiful Sister, and I don’t want to drown my awesome little sister, Brutta, so I am not going to do it! Besides, she’s not ugly and that’s just mean to call someone that hateful word. We found a spell that will change

our well into a portal. By the time anyone finds this note, we'll be long gone into another world where we're not forced to relive stupid stories.

That's right! Besides, like I'd ever let my sister drown my pet butterflies. I regularly whip her butt in Grimmastics class.

You wish! I'll race you to the well!

Do you think Bella and Brutta escaped their destiny? Was it a good decision for them to rebel? And would it be fair for Brutta to stay ugly for the rest of her life?

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Find your answer and make sure you read Apple White and Raven Queen's entire adventure in *The Storybook of Legends*, available now!

And don't miss the sequel, coming March 2014!

About the Author

New York Times bestselling author Shannon Hale knew at age ten that it was her destiny to become a writer. She has quested deep into fairy tales in such enchanting books as *The Goose Girl*, *Book of a Thousand Days*, *Rapunzel's Revenge*, and Newbery Honor recipient *Princess Academy*. With the princely and valiant writer Dean Hale, Shannon coauthored four charming children, who are free to follow their own destinies. Just so long as they get to bed on time.

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Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Welcome](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Copyright](#)

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